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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 003795

SIPDIS

MOSCOW, TEL AVIV FOR BOLTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IT](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY WILL PROVIDE TROOPS IN SUPPORT OF OEF
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REF: A. A) ROME 3760 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. B) ROME 3703

CLASSIFIED BY: ACTING DCM THOMAS COUNTRYMAN, 1.5(B)(D)

[1](#)1. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. PLEASE SEE PARAGRAPH 5.

[1](#)2. (C) ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER SILVIO BERLUSCONI WILL RECOMMEND TO PARLIAMENT THAT ITALY SEND TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, ACCORDING TO BERLUSCONI'S TOP ADVISOR, GIOVANNI CASTELLANETA. IN A MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR SEMBLER AND A/DCM ON AUGUST 1 TO FOLLOW-UP ON A JULY 31 DISCUSSION (REFTEL A), CASTELLANETA SAID THE GOI WOULD LIKE US INPUT ON TWO OPTIONS THAT ARE BEING DISCUSSED BY THE PM'S OFFICE, THE CHIEF OF DEFENSE AND THE ITALIAN LIAISON CELL IN TAMPA. UNDER OPTION 1, ITALY WOULD SEND 1,000 ADDITIONAL TROOPS TO KFOR TO FREE UP US TROOPS FOR OEF. THIS COULD BE DONE IMMEDIATELY, WITHOUT PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW. UNDER OPTION 2, ITALY WOULD SEND TROOPS (EITHER COMBAT OR SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES) TO AFGHANISTAN. THIS WOULD INVOLVE PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIONS, IF NOT A VOTE, WHICH WOULD MEAN WAITING FOR PARLIAMENT'S RETURN IN MID-SEPTEMBER. IF THE USG PREFERS OPTION 2, THE GOI NEEDS MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TYPE OF MISSION ANTICIPATED IN ORDER TO DETERMINE WHICH TROOPS SHOULD BE DEPLOYED, CASTELLANETA SAID.

[1](#)3. (C) NOTING THAT THE US WOULD LIKELY BE RELUCTANT TO SET OFF SUSPICIONS THAT WE ARE WITHDRAWING SUPPORT FROM BALKANS OPERATIONS, THE AMBASSADOR SAID OPTION 2 MAY BE PREFERRED.
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HE ASKED WHETHER PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW IS LEGALLY NECESSARY, OR MORE OF A POLITICAL REQUIREMENT. CASTELLANETA CONFIRMED THAT THERE IS A REAL POLITICAL, NOT LEGAL, NEED TO CONSULT WITH PARLIAMENT, BUT PREDICTED THAT THE PROCESS WOULD LIKELY LEAD TO STRONGER PUBLIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR DEPLOYING ITALIAN TROOPS. BERLUSCONI WOULD RAISE THE REQUEST WITH PARLIAMENT IN MID-SEPTEMBER, AND TROOPS COULD BE DEPLOYED IN THE FALL, BEFORE THE AFGHAN WINTER BEGINS, HE SAID.

[1](#)4. (C) CASTELLANETA SAID AMBASSADOR SALLEO, WHO RECENTLY MET WITH PENTAGON OFFICIALS, HAD REPORTED STRONG REGARD WITHIN DOD FOR THE ALPINI BRIGADE. AGAIN, CASTELLANETA URGED THAT WE PROVIDE MORE PRECISE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MISSION SO THAT THE GOI CAN DETERMINE WHICH TROOPS WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE TO SEND. THE AMBASSADOR ASSURED HIM THAT THE EMBASSY WILL SHARE THE DETAILS WE OBTAIN FROM WASHINGTON, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT TAMPA IS THE CENTRAL POINT FOR COORDINATING DISCUSSIONS ABOUT OPERATIONAL DETAILS, SUCH AS WHICH TYPE OF FORCES ARE NEEDED AND WHEN.

[1](#)5. (C) ACTION REQUEST. PLEASE INFORM EMBASSY WHICH OPTION IS PREFERRED: BACKFILLING TROOPS IN THE BALKANS (OPTION 1) OR DEPLOYING TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN (OPTION 2). A RESPONSE BEFORE MONDAY, AUGUST 5 WOULD ALLOW U/S BOLTON TO DELIVER THE USG RESPONSE TO SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS, INCLUDING CASTELLANETA, WHILE HE IS IN ROME. IF OPTION 2 IS PREFERRED, AS WE EXPECT, PLEASE PROVIDE AVAILABLE DETAILS REGARDING THE EXPECTED MISSION IN ORDER TO HELP THE ITALIANS IDENTIFY THE APPROPRIATE TROOPS TO DEPLOY. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING WHICH TROOPS ARE ROTATING OUT AND WHEN FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES.

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